

MARVEL

17

DAVID
SLINEY
ROSENBERG



DAMNATION

BEN REILLY:

THE SCARLET SPIDER



ROSENBERG
2 0 8
12

Years ago, Miles Warren, one of Peter Parker's college professors, stole a sample of Peter's genetic material and used it to create a perfect clone of Spider-Man. With all of Peter's memories, the clone fled. Created, not born, and without an identity of his own, he gave himself a new name and made his own way in the world as...



BEN REILLY:

THE SCARLET SPIDER

Following a misguided turn as a super villain, **BEN REILLY** has made a home for himself in Las Vegas. Becoming the **SCARLET SPIDER** once more, he has been trying to be a better man. But lately, Ben's choices have been less than heroic. After a visit from Lady Death, he learned that his very soul is now in jeopardy.

Dr. Stephen Strange recently used his magical powers to repair the damage done to Las Vegas from Hydra Cap's attack during SECRET EMPIRE. But Strange's efforts summoned the HOTEL INFERNO along with the evil MEPHISTO to the Strip, who has transformed many of the revived souls--and the AVENGERS--into his demonic minions.

Ben originally joined Strange's ally WONG and the new MIDNIGHT SONS to save Las Vegas, but Mephisto's struck a nefarious bargain with the Scarlet Spider. A deal that could be the only way to save Ben's corrupted soul from...

NOTE: THE EVENTS OF BEN REILLY #17 TAKE PLACE BEFORE DOCTOR STRANGE: DAMNATION #4.

WRITER
PETER DAVID

ARTIST
WILL SLINEY

COLOR ARTIST
RACHELLE ROSENBERG

LETTERER
VC'S JOE CARAMAGNA

COVER ARTISTS **KHARY RANDOLPH & EMILIO LOPEZ**

ASSISTANT EDITOR
TOM GRONEMAN

EDITOR
DEVIN LEWIS

EXECUTIVE EDITOR
NICK LOWE

EDITOR IN CHIEF
C.B. CEBULSKI

CHIEF CREATIVE OFFICER
JOE QUESADA

PRESIDENT
DAN BUCKLEY

EXECUTIVE PRODUCER
ALAN FINE

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I MADE A DEAL WITH THE DEVIL...TO SAVE ABIGAIL'S LIFE, AND TO SAVE MY SOUL.

I MUST'VE BEEN CRAZY. WHAT GOOD WOULD A PURIFIED SOUL DO ME IF I'M THEN DAMNED WHEN I DIE?

JEEZ, WHAT IF THAT WAS SUCH AN EVIL DECISION TO MAKE THAT--

GOTTA CHECK MY FACE, SEE IF I'M TOTALLY EVIL.

WHEWWWWW...

MAYBE MY SOUL'S WAITING TO SEE WHAT I ACTUALLY DO. WHETHER I'M ON THE SIDE OF MEPHISTO...

...OR THE MIDNIGHT SONS.

I KEEP TELLING MYSELF I DID THE RIGHT THING.

AND IT'S NOT LIKE THE MIDNIGHT SONS LIKE ME, ESPECIALLY. THEY WENT TO TAKE ON THE EVIL AVENGERS AND LEFT ME AT MEPHISTO'S EVIL HOTEL...

MAKE SURE NO INNOCENT SOULS COME WANDERING IN.

THEY WANTED ME TO STAND GUARD...

STAND FREAKING GUARD!

HOTEL
INFERNO

KRAAAK

OW.
OW OW
OW.

AAAAND THE WALL FIXED ITSELF.

FREAKING FIGURES.

EVEN THE WEB BLOCKADE I CREATED FELL APART.

THAT'S ABOUT PAR FOR THE COURSE.



THE DEAL SEEMED TO MAKE SO MUCH SENSE AT THE TIME. IT WOULD SOLVE BOTH MY MAJOR PROBLEMS.

THE WAY I'VE ACTED, MY SOUL PROBABLY ENDS UP DAMNED ANYWAY. SO THAT'S NO LOSS...

AND ABIGAIL'S CURED. PLUS WITH MY SOUL PURIFIED, I GET TO BE A HERO AGAIN.

EXCEPT...WHAT KIND OF IDIOT MAKES A DEAL WITH THE DEVIL?

IF HE OFFERED A DEAL TO ANY OF THE MIDNIGHT SONS, THEY'D TELL HIM TO STICK IT WHERE THE SUN DON'T SHINE.

HOW CAN I CALL MYSELF A HERO IF I ACT TOTALLY DIFFERENTLY FROM THE WAY HEROES ACT?

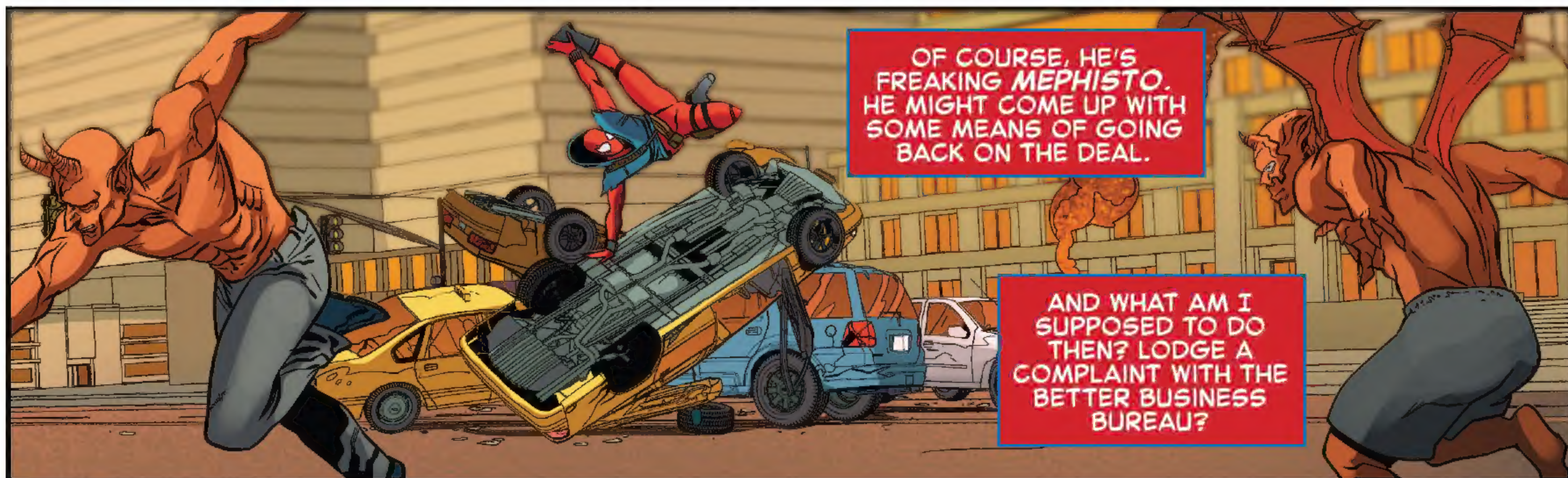
PETER AND KAINE BOTH SAID I WAS A VILLAIN. I KEPT SAYING NO. BUT WHAT HERO WOULD DO WHAT I DID?

ONE WHO WANTED TO SAVE AN INNOCENT GIRL, I GUESS.



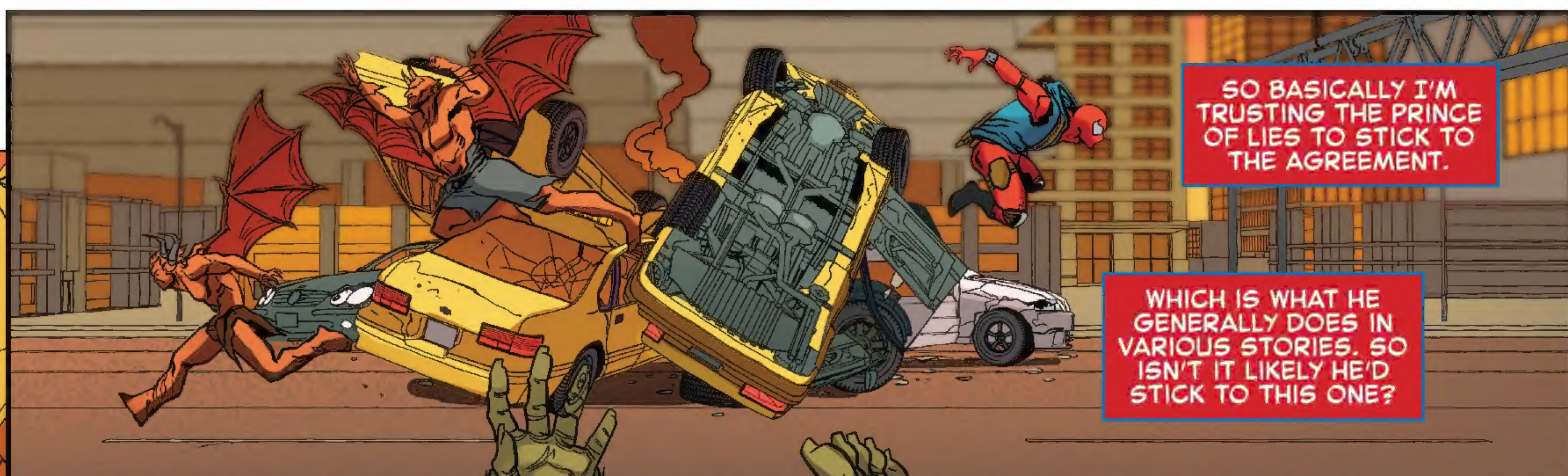
IT SEEMED SO SIMPLE TO MAKE THE DEAL WITH HIM.

HE CURES ABBY, CURES MY SOUL... AND ALL I HAVE TO DO IS HELP HIM IN A FIGHT HE'LL LIKELY WIN ANYWAY.



OF COURSE, HE'S FREAKING *MEPHISTO*. HE MIGHT COME UP WITH SOME MEANS OF GOING BACK ON THE DEAL.

AND WHAT AM I SUPPOSED TO DO THEN? LODGE A COMPLAINT WITH THE BETTER BUSINESS BUREAU?



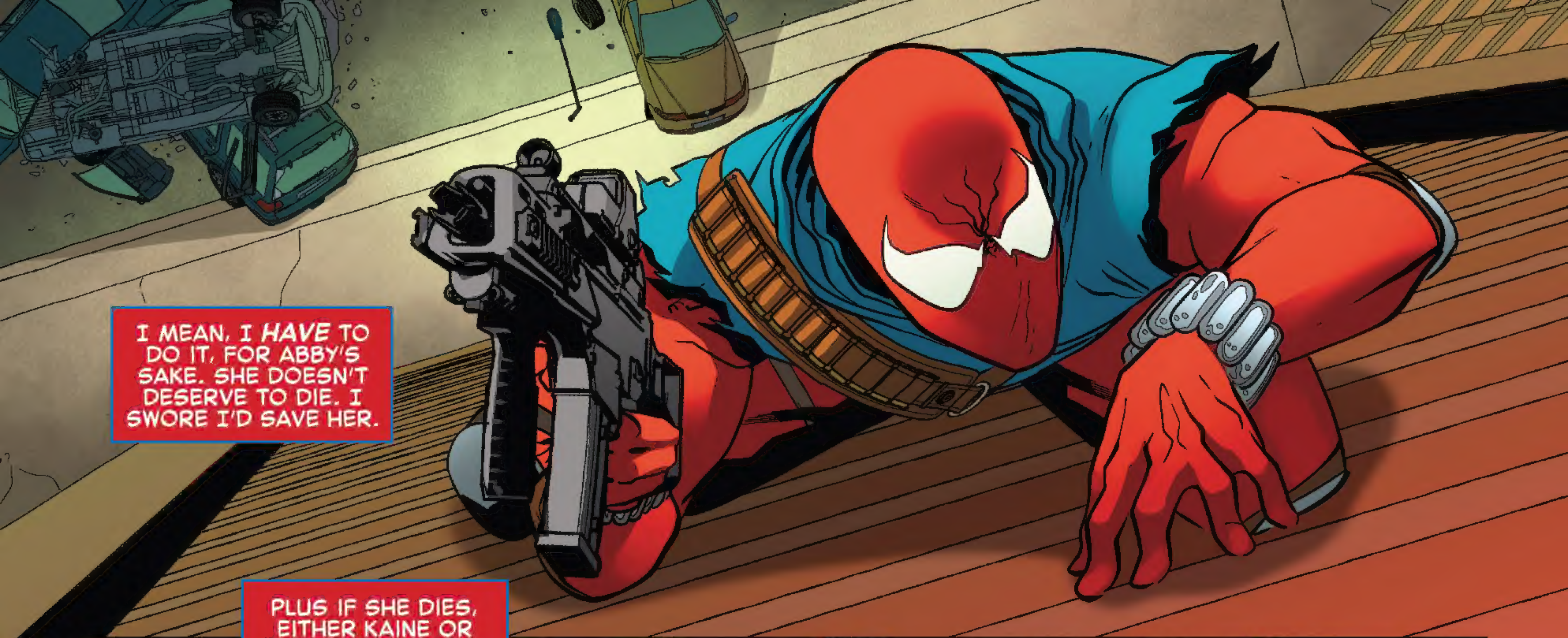
SO BASICALLY I'M TRUSTING THE PRINCE OF LIES TO STICK TO THE AGREEMENT.

WHICH IS WHAT HE GENERALLY DOES IN VARIOUS STORIES. SO ISN'T IT LIKELY HE'D STICK TO THIS ONE?



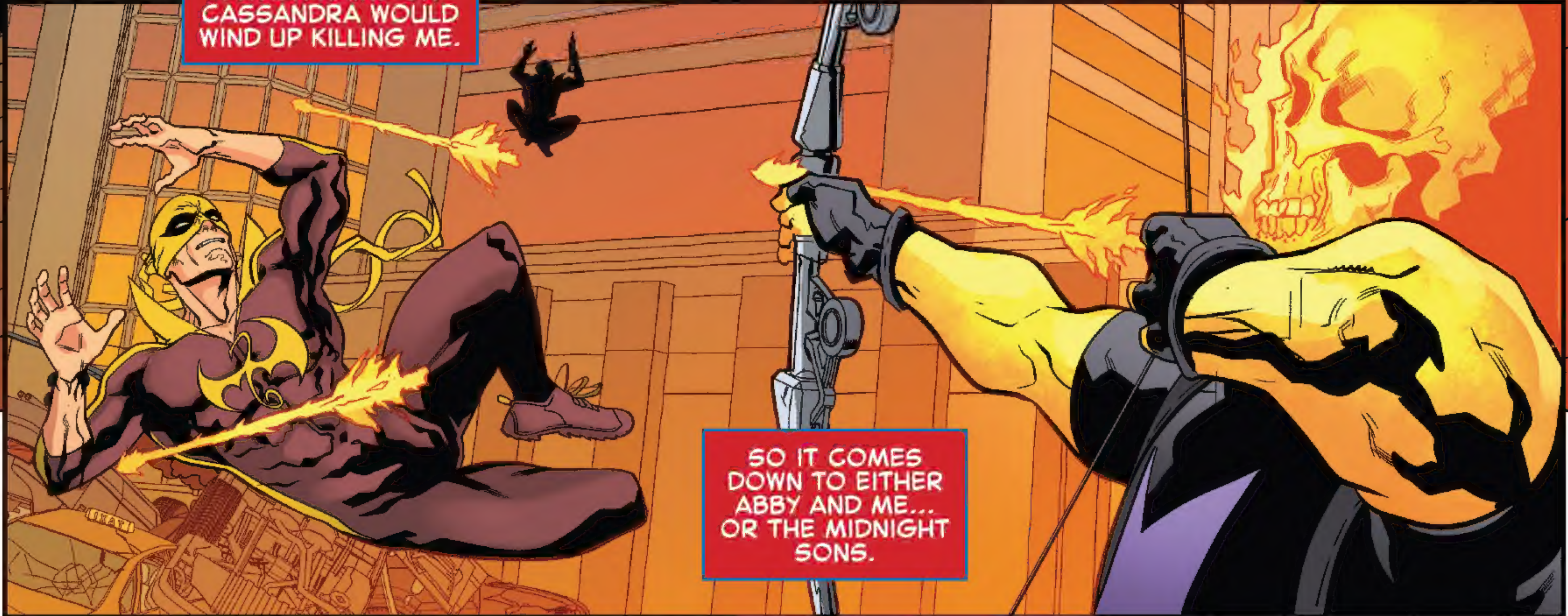
WHOA!





I MEAN, I HAVE TO DO IT, FOR ABBY'S SAKE. SHE DOESN'T DESERVE TO DIE. I SWORE I'D SAVE HER.

PLUS IF SHE DIES, EITHER KAINE OR CASSANDRA WOULD WIND UP KILLING ME.

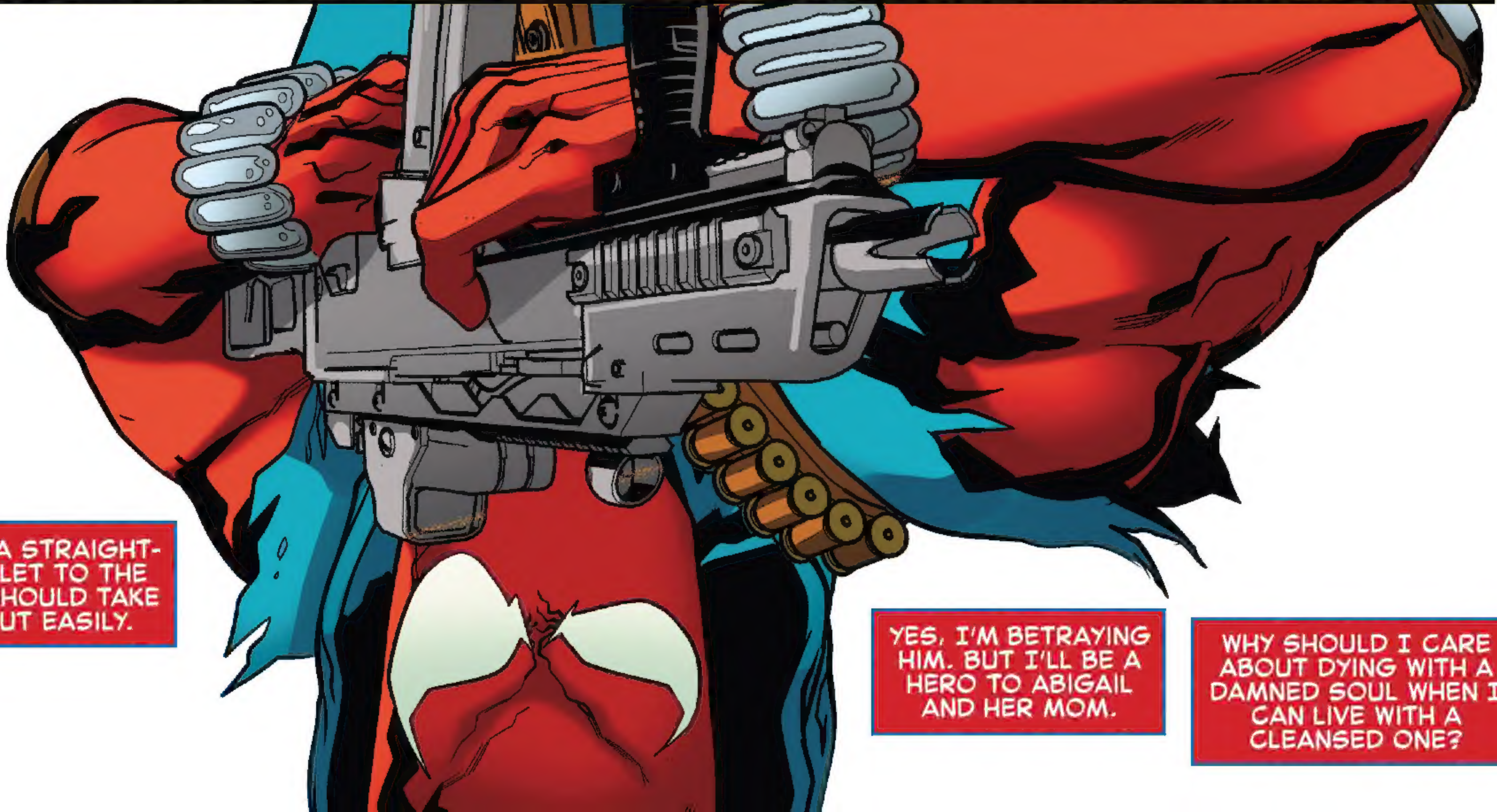


SO IT COMES DOWN TO EITHER ABBY AND ME... OR THE MIDNIGHT SONS.



OBVIOUSLY, I CHOOSE ABBY.

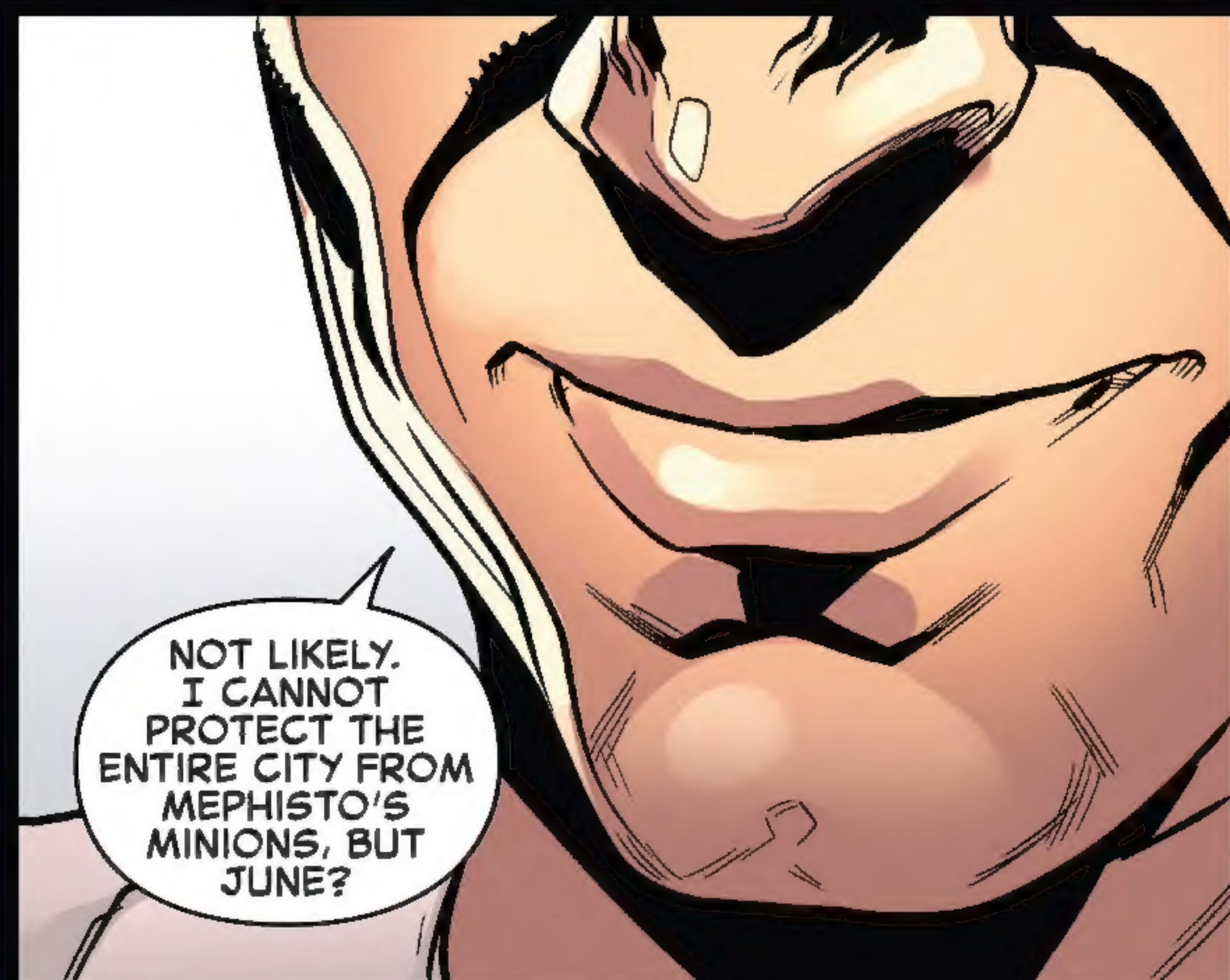
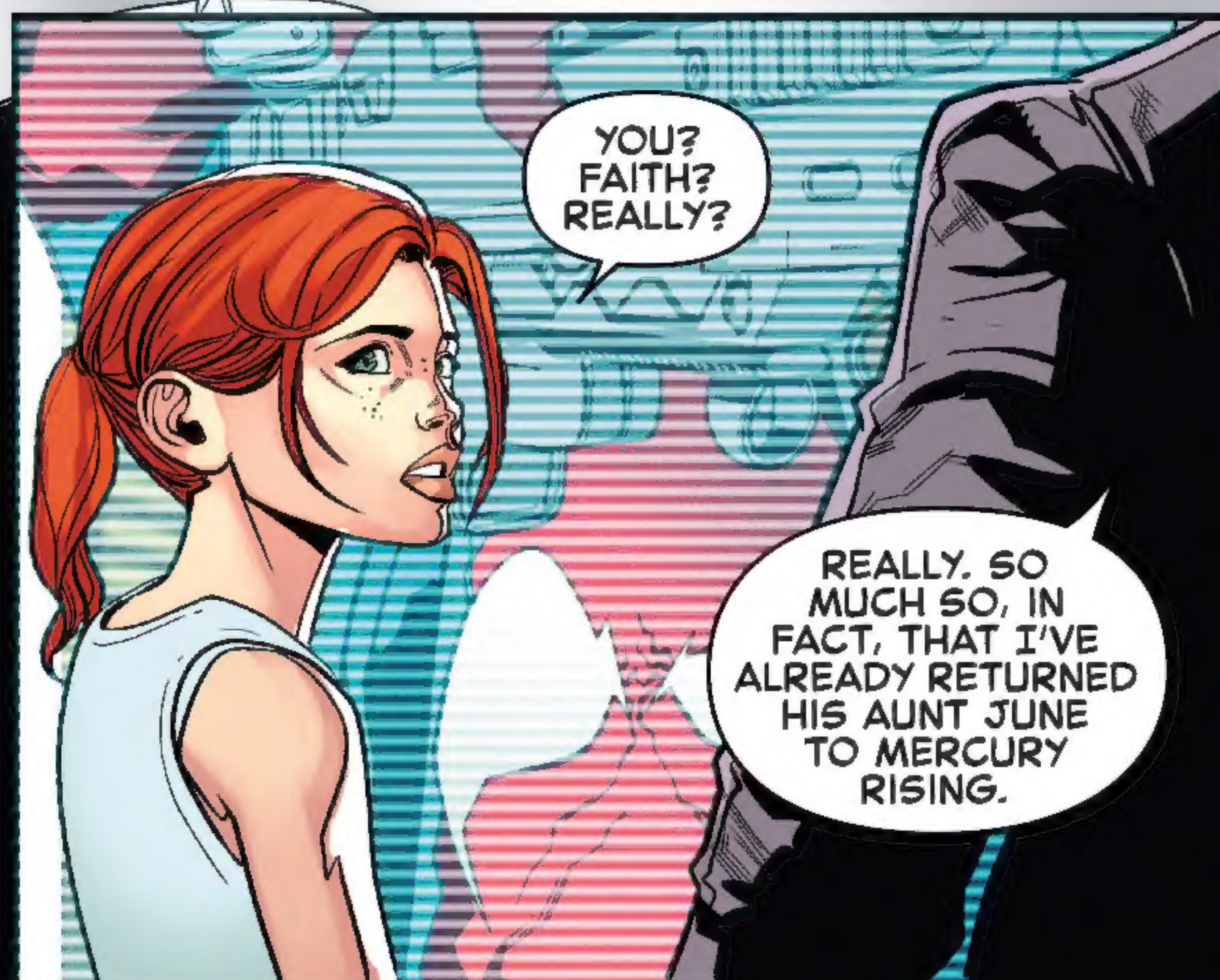
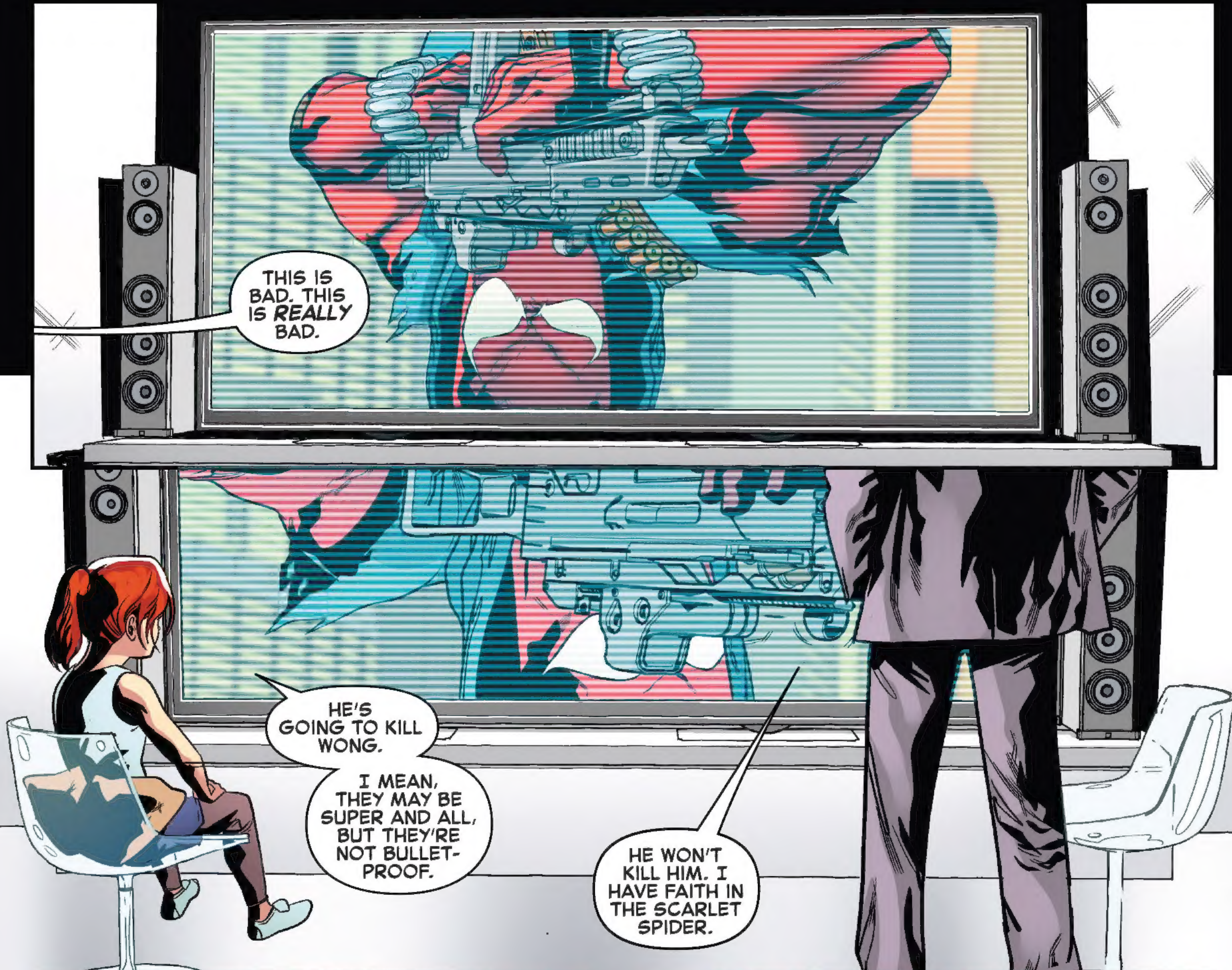
WONG IS SO BUSY DEFENDING HIMSELF FROM CAPTAIN MARVEL...



...THAT A STRAIGHT-UP BULLET TO THE BRAIN SHOULD TAKE HIM OUT EASILY.

YES, I'M BETRAYING HIM. BUT I'LL BE A HERO TO ABIGAIL AND HER MOM.

WHY SHOULD I CARE ABOUT DYING WITH A DAMNED SOUL WHEN I CAN LIVE WITH A CLEANSED ONE?



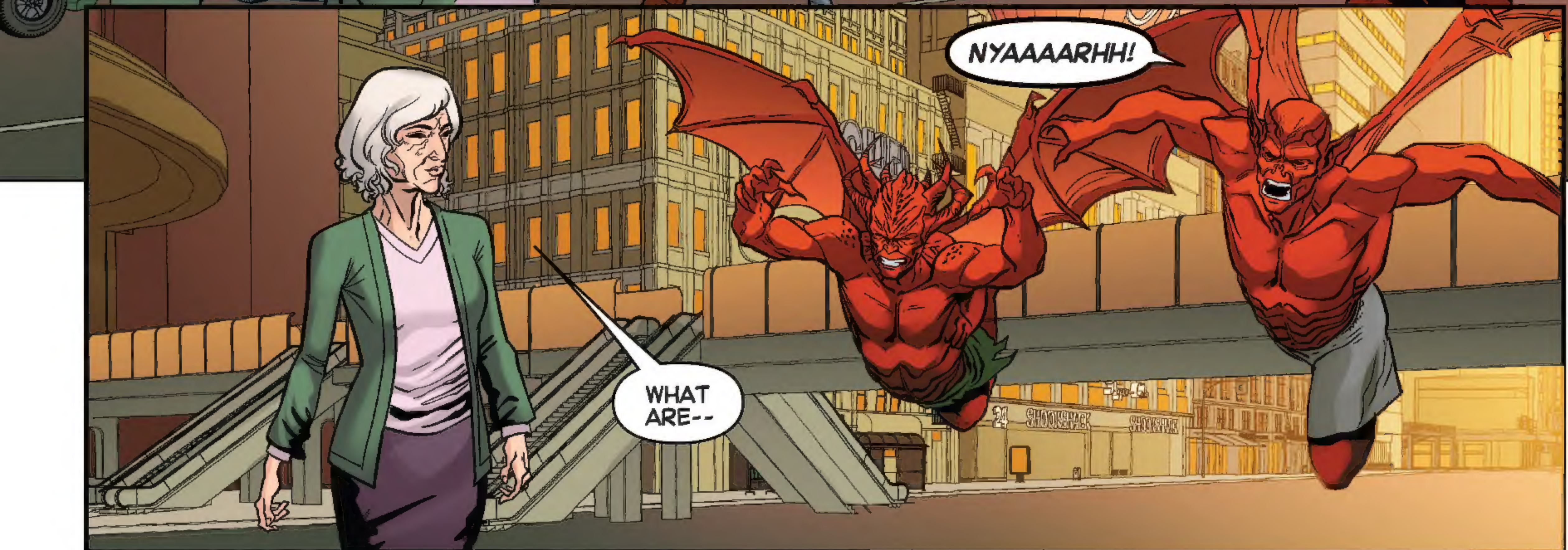


"THAT'S NO PROBLEM AT ALL."

HOW THE HELL DID I GET HERE?

LAST THING I REMEMBER WAS BEING IN MY ROOM. NOW I'M OUTSIDE?

MAYBE I'M GOING SENILE.

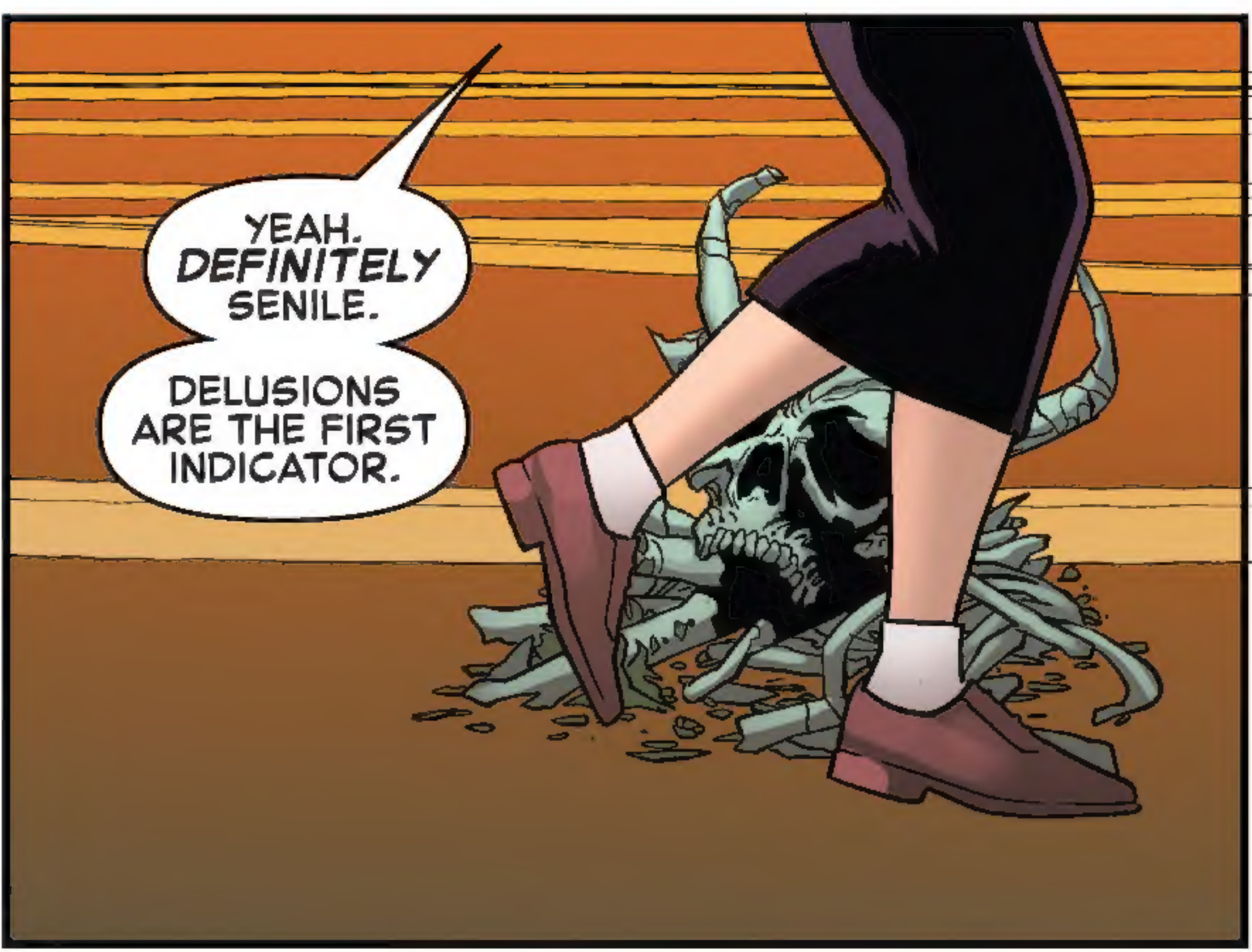
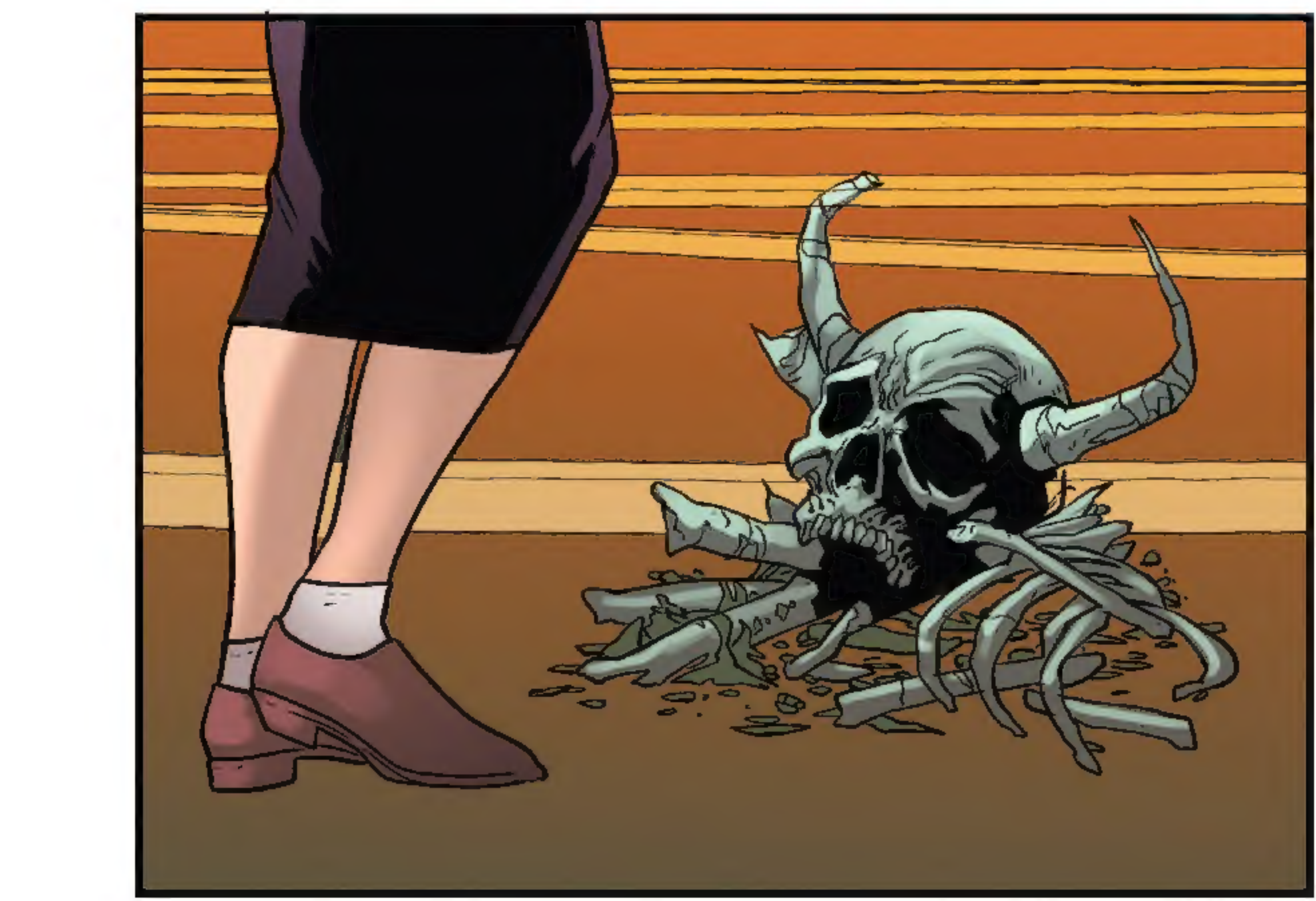


NYAAAAARHH!

WHAT ARE--

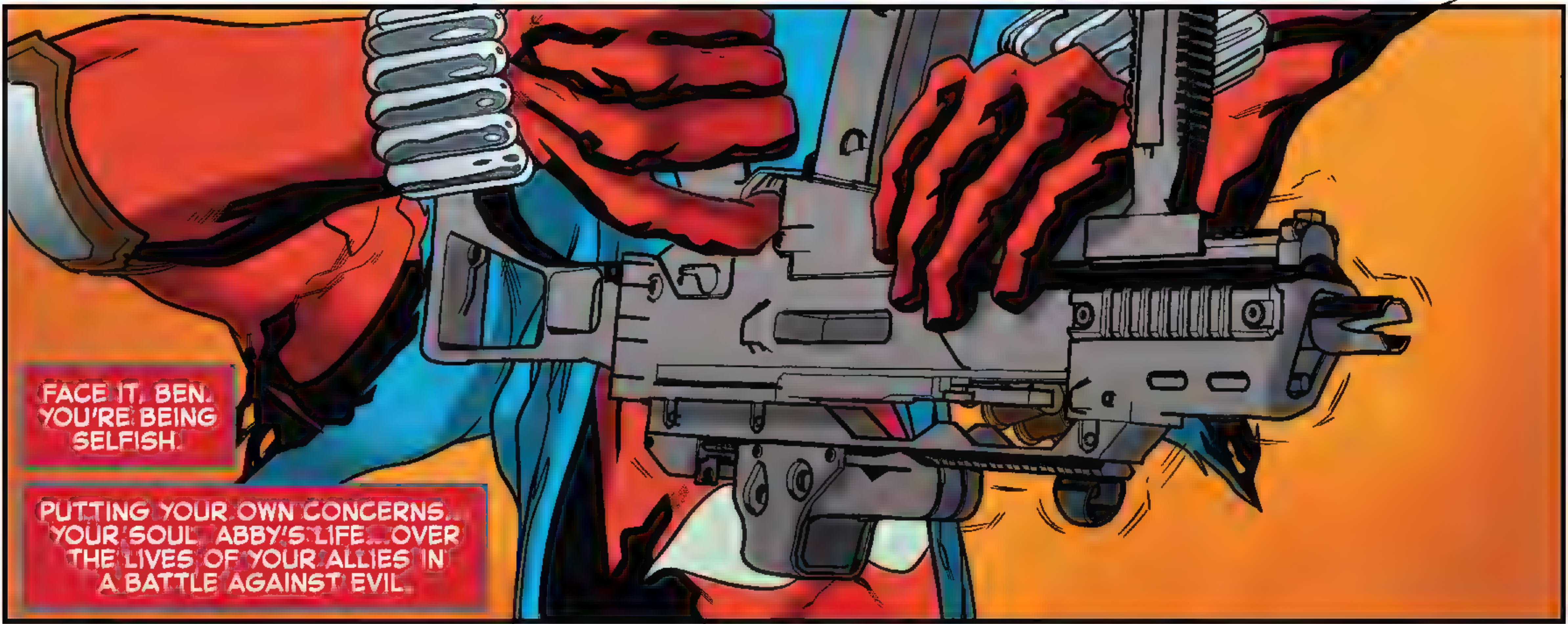


FWAZZAAAK



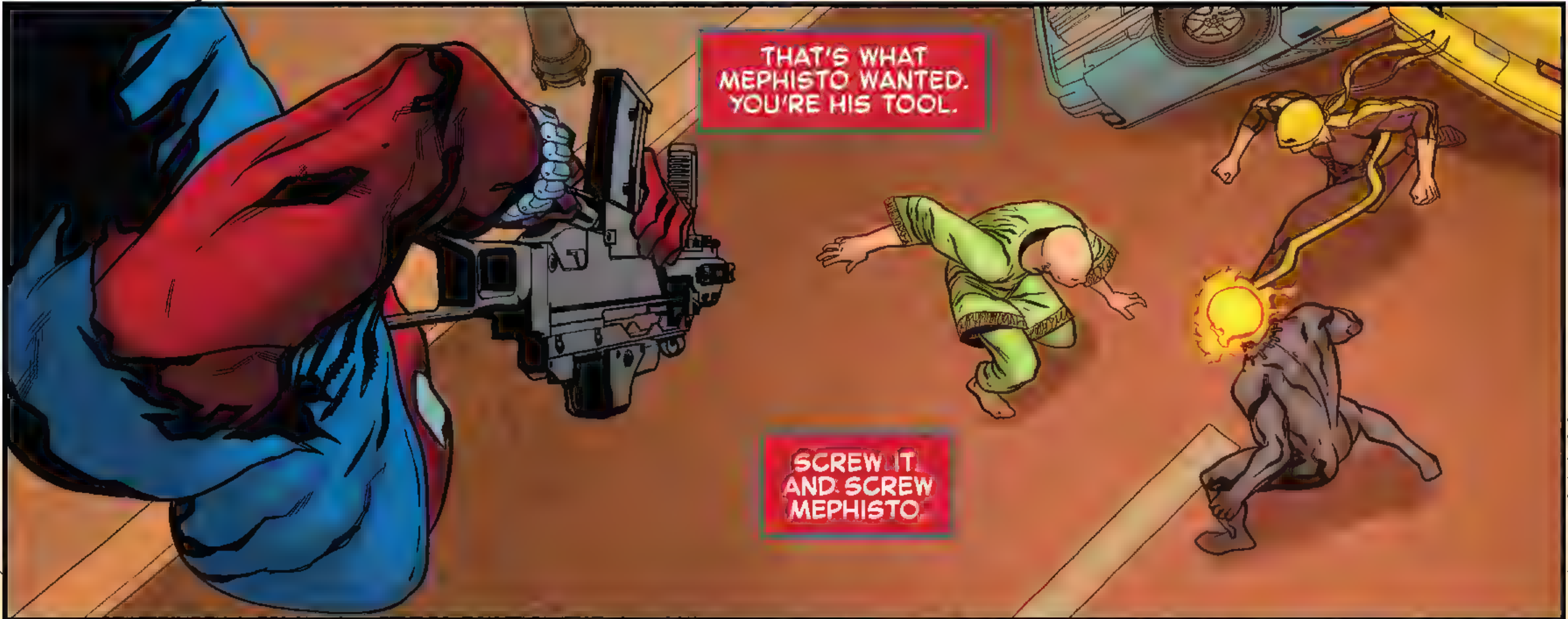
YEAH. DEFINITELY SENILE.

DELUSIONS ARE THE FIRST INDICATOR.



FACE IT, BEN.
YOU'RE BEING
SELFISH.

PUTTING YOUR OWN CONCERNS,
YOUR SOUL, ABBY'S LIFE... OVER
THE LIVES OF YOUR ALLIES IN
A BATTLE AGAINST EVIL.



THAT'S WHAT
MEPHISTO WANTED.
YOU'RE HIS TOOL.

SCREW IT.
AND SCREW
MEPHISTO.



HUH?!

WH-WHERE
DID--?



OOOOOH
CRAP

TRAITOR!
YOU DIDN'T
SHOOT! YOU
DIDN'T DO
ANYTHING!

MEPHISTO
KNOWS, BETRAYER!
YOU BROKE THE
DEAL!





OH,
GREAT. HE'S
INVISIBLE.

...BUT MAYBE I CAN
BLUFF THE DEMON.

I'VE STILL GOT MY
SPIDER-SENSE,
KAINE.

YOU CAN'T
HIT ME, EVEN
WHEN I CAN'T
SEE YOU.

AND MY SPIDER-
SENSE WON'T
REACT TO HIM
BECAUSE HE'S LIKE
ANOTHER ME...

MISSED,
DAMMIT.

WHAT'S THE
MATTER, KAINE?
TOO SCARED TO
COME OUT AND
FACE ME?

FWOOSH

GRIPES. TOO
CLOSE. WAAAY
TOO CLOSE.



YEAH, THIS
IS GETTING ME
NOWHERE.

TIME TO GET
AGGRESSIVE.



OBVIOUSLY
MEPHISTO DID TO
KAINE THE SAME
THING HE DID TO
THE AVENGERS.

WHICH MEANS HE'S
MEPHISTO'S NOW,
BUT NOT IN THE
"LET'S MAKE A DEAL"
SENSE THAT I AM.



KRAAAASH



OHHHH!
HERE WE
GO AGAIN.



THIS IS NOT HOW I
EXPECTED TO BE
SPENDING MY WEEKEND.



I'M GONNA HAVE
TO FIND A WAY TO
SHUT HIM DOWN
AND I BETTER
MAKE IT FAST.

BEEN KEEPING A VIAL OF
HOLY WATER EVER SINCE A
DEMON TOOK THE FORM
OF THE BLACK MARVEL.
DIDN'T THINK I'D EVER HAVE
TO USE IT ON KAINE.



FIRST
THINGS
FIRST.

GOTTA LURE
HIM OUT OF
THIS HELLHOLE.

COME ON,
KAINE. DO WHAT
I NEED YOU
TO DO.







WHAT...
...THE
HELL...
...JUST
HAPPENED?



THERE'S A FOUNTAIN
NOT TOO FAR FROM
HERE THAT'S BLESSED
WITH HOLY WATER.
REMEMBER?

RIGHT.
RIGHT,
YES.

CONSIDERING WHAT WAS
GOING ON, I DECIDED TO
PICK UP A SAMPLE FROM
IT JUST IN CASE.

SURE
GLAD I DID
THAT.



HOW DID
YOU GET
POSSESSED,
ANYWAY?

A GIANT
UNEARTHLY
CASINO APPEARED
OUT OF NOWHERE.
NATURALLY I CAME
TO INVESTIGATE
IT, SAME
AS YOU.

WELL,
THAT WAS A
STUPID THING
TO DO.



WHY?
YOU DID
IT.

YEAH, I
DID, BUT NOT
EXACTLY
WILLINGLY.

WHAT'S
THAT
SUPPOSED
TO MEAN?

NOTHING.



BEN...

THE DEMON
WHO POSSESSED ME
MADE ME STOP YOU
BECAUSE HE THOUGHT YOU
WERE GOING TO SHOOT
ONE OF MEPHISTO'S
HELPERS.

I REMEMBER
HIS THOUGHTS.
HE WAS THINKING,
"TRAITOR."

WHY WOULD
HE HAVE
THOUGHT
THAT?



BEN?

BEN,
DAMMIT, SAY
SOMETHING!



BEN,
WHAT DID
YOU DO?!

I MADE
A DEAL,
OKAY?!



I MADE
A DEAL. TO
SERVE MEPHISTO.
AND HELP STOP
THE MIDNIGHT
SONS.



ARE
YOU OUT
OF YOUR
MIND?!

DON'T
YOU WANT TO
KNOW WHAT I'M
GETTING OUT
OF IT?

NO!



IT'S CALLED
A DEAL WITH
THE DEVIL FOR
A REASON!

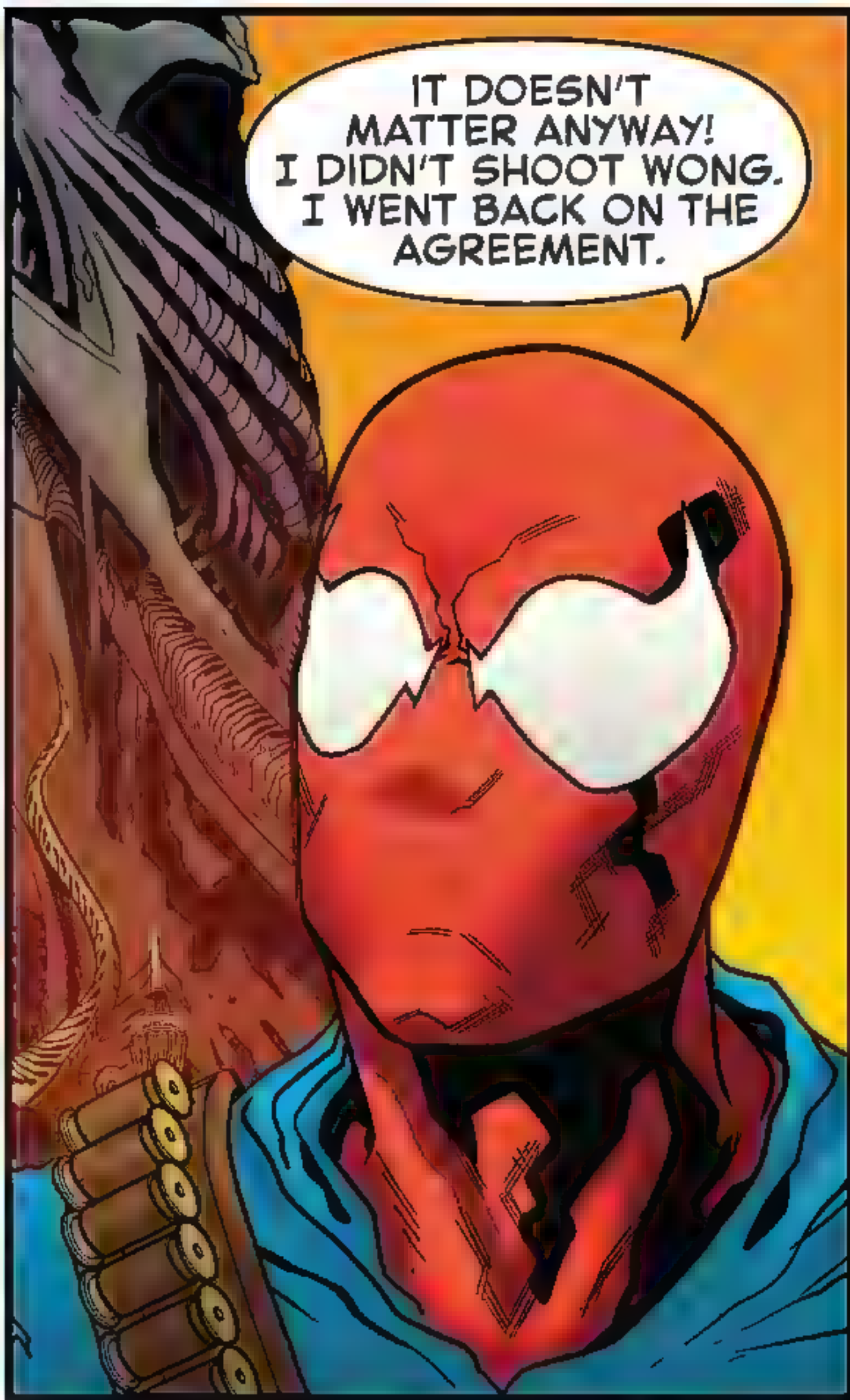
HE'LL
SCREW YOU
OUT OF WHATEVER
HE PROMISED!
THAT'S WHAT EVIL
DEALMAKERS
ALWAYS DO!



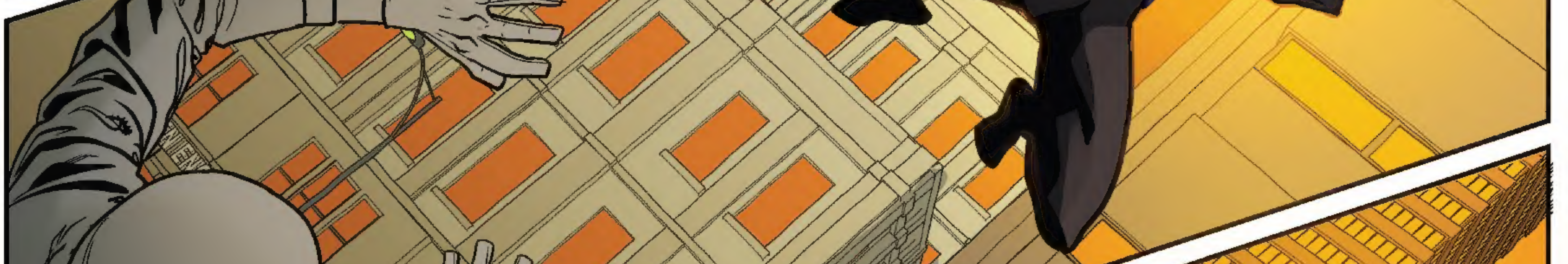
HE SAID
HE'D CURE
ABIGAIL!

AT
WHAT COST?
HER SOUL,
TOO?

EVEN IF HE
CURES HER, HE'LL
LIKELY ARRANGE AN
ACCIDENT AFTER THAT
SO SHE DIES
ANYWAY!







SCARLET LETTERS

Send e-mail to SPIDEYOFFICE@MARVEL.COM (please mark as "OKAY TO PRINT") and letters c/o Spider-Office, 135 West 50th Street, 7th Floor, New York, NY 10020

HELLO, CLONE-HEADS!

Here we go—into the gates of hell itself and the epic conclusion of DAMNATION! Be sure to pick up the crossover's epic final issue to see how Ben Reilly and the rest of the Midnight Sons fare against Mephisto in just TWO WEEKS!

For those of you just joining us, here's a handy checklist so you can get caught up on the entire DAMNATION event:

FEBRUARY

- ✓ DAMNATION #1
- ✓ DOCTOR STRANGE #386

MARCH

- ✓ DAMNATION #2
- ✓ DOCTOR STRANGE #387
- ✓ SCARLET SPIDER #15
- ✓ DAMNATION #3
- ✓ IRON FIST #78
- ✓ SCARLET SPIDER #16
- ✓ JOHNNY BLAZE: GHOST RIDER #1 (OF 1)

APRIL

- ✓ DOCTOR STRANGE #388
- ✓ IRON FIST #79
- ✓ IRON FIST #80
- ✓ SCARLET SPIDER #17
- DAMNATION #4
- DOCTOR STRANGE #389

Now, if you're one of our regular readers, you're no doubt aware that Ben's been struggling with the state of his very soul these past seventeen issues, and, if you REALLY know your Marvel stuff, you're probably also aware that Mephisto has a strange fascination with the Parker clan. And while Ben may consider himself a second-tier Spider, the mantra of power and responsibility still echoes through his bones. Whether Ben can adhere to it and find a way out of his bargain with the devil, though, is a different matter entirely...

Enough prophesizing! Let's get to your letters!

Web-slingers!

Initially, I wasn't onboard for SCARLET SPIDER. Except for SPIDER-MAN 2099, I wasn't reading any of the other current Spider-Books and I had no idea how Ben was back. He also wasn't a character I had ever followed and I wasn't sure I was going to read this series at all.

But then 2099 ended and there I was without a Peter David book to read. I knew Peter David was doing this Scarlet Spider book, but I still wasn't sure about it. Not surprisingly, Mr. David has won me over. Eventually, Will Sliney switched over too. And then my friend Brian told me Marlo showed up in those SCARLET pages! That clinched it. Mr. David can make sense of any character and he always builds such great supporting casts. Lady Death taking an interest in Ben was a great twist and it was awesome seeing the Slingers again.

Yay, numbered questions!

- 1) Any chance of a crossover with Miguel O'Hara? It'd be great to see Will Sliney draw both of his Spiders in the same story.
- 2) Speaking of Spider-Crossovers, how about some time with Miles Morales?
- 3) Last time we saw him, Maestro from SPIDER-MAN 2099 #10 (2015) was out in New Mexico. I'd love to see that come to the forefront again.

It's awesome when Peter David takes threads from multiple series he's worked on and brings them together.

I'd like to offer my heartfelt thanks to Marvel and Peter David for some great series over the years. I just got THE INCREDIBLE HULK "Fall of the Pantheon" Epic Collection by Peter David, and I was shocked to see an old letters page with one of my letters reprinted in that trade. What a great surprise!

Keep up the great work!
Anthony B.

Hey Anthony, thanks for writing! We don't have any plans currently for any Spider-Guest Stars to make an appearance in BEN REILLY: THE SCARLET SPIDER, especially because Miguel is back in his home reality (now the year 2100)—which, if you haven't read, is a great story and worth picking up!

Hi there, Web-Heads!

A Belgian fan here! I've been an avid Scarlet Spider fan for my entire comic-book-reading life (about eleven years)! I've always enjoyed the underdog nature of Ben Reilly's story and how he struggles to step out of Peter Parker's shadow. Ever since the announcement of BEN REILLY: THE SCARLET SPIDER more than a year ago, I was both excited and anxious. A new Scarlet Spider story? How? What? Why now?

But Peter David did prove me wrong with his amazing story and astounding writing, as he did with other books beforehand. To be completely honest—whatever you do with Scarlet Spider, I'll keep buying these comics! Make Mine Marvel!

P.S. This was my first ever Spider-Letter!

Killian C.
Belgium

Thanks for reading, Killian, and for writing in your first-ever piece of Spider-Mail! It's always great to hear that Spider-Fans like you are enjoying the books we're making here at the House of Ideas! Ben's my favorite Spider-Hero ever since I started reading comics, too—it's been a bit longer for me, though! Hope you like where we're taking Ben next!

I'm a big fan of Kaine as the Scarlet Spider. I was wondering if the artists on the series could start drawing the characters to scale. Kaine is supposed to be 6'4" and 250 lbs, whereas Ben Reilly is the same height and weight as Peter Parker. When Kaine had his own series as the Scarlet Spider, the creative teams did a very good job of showing and noting in dialogue his unique physicality. It's disheartening when Kaine and Ben Reilly are drawn the same way.

This is just a suggestion and here's hoping that Kaine, the Scarlet Spider, is part of the new "Fresh Start" initiative. Make Mine Marvel!!!

Patrice M.
NYC

Hey, Patrice, sharp eye! You're not wrong about Kaine's physicality, though if one were so inclined as to try to earn an infamous Marvel No-Prize, one might contend that, as a result of Kaine's multiple transformations into various Spider-Creatures and back, his DNA might have undergone some kind of rejuvenation, restoring his genetics and appearance to a state closer to those of Peter Parker.

Or maybe we'll just make him taller and beefier.

I just wanted to say I'm a huge Kaine/Scarlet Spider fan, and when I heard Ben Reilly was coming back as the Scarlet Spider I was pretty

skeptical. But after catching up on the comics, I'm super impressed and I'm glad to see Ben Reilly back.

Jason M.



I have been a long-time reader of Peter David's writing. The first comic I read on a regular basis, when I was around 8 years old, was his run on X-FACTOR. At the time, I was ignorant of the fact someone actually had to author these amazing adventures. Later, as a teenager, after I had turned away from comics for a few years, it was Peter's work on CAPTAIN MARVEL that brought me back into the fold. It was then that I discovered the books that I enjoyed the most were all written by the same person!

I am glad to say I never wandered away from comics again and have always looked for books written by Peter David, from his amazing rejuvenation of X-FACTOR, his return to Miguel O'Hara on SPIDER-MAN 2099, writing X-FACTOR for a third time and most recently Peter's run on SCARLET SPIDER. Please, Mr. David (and the rest of the creative team), continue to create amazing stories with just the right amount of humor and drama as you always have and I will continue to follow.

Thanks to Peter for all for the hard work he's put into this material throughout the years.

Michael
Tallahassee



Dear Spider-Team,

I wanted to extend my appreciation to the editorial team for the extremely well-handled integration of "The Slingers Return" with the DAMNATION event. I've seen too many books abruptly concluding perfectly good storylines in order to begin a completely unrelated tie-in, and it's refreshing to see the groundwork laid out so well over the course of the series. I'm budgeted to go all-in for DAMNATION and am hoping to walk out with a few more books on my monthly reading list.

Also, I began reading Spider-Man during his awkward "Clone Saga" phase back in the '90s. Ben will always be my Spider, for better or worse. Keep up the good work! Ben may not be quite how I remember, but the road to 2018 was long and few can boast of making it this far in the same state they envisioned.

Gene R.

Thanks for the kind words, Gene! Tom and I would love to accept credit, but, in reality, it's a team effort! Not only did DAMNATION editors Nick Lowe and Kathleen Wisneski have a clear and understandable vision for the event, but Peter himself is also so adept at weaving the Marvel Universe into the tapestries of his stories (and vice versa) that going from our LEGACY crossover into DAMNATION was a piece of cake. We can't wait for you to see what's next!

All right, that's all the space I've got for this issue, folks. Keep sending your letters to SPIDEYOFFICE@MARVEL.COM and mark 'em "okay to print."

Be back here in ONE MONTH for BEN REILLY: THE SCARLET SPIDER #18, the first chapter of André Lima Araújo's two-part return to the pages of SCARLET SPIDER!

Over and out!
Devin
3.14.2018
@edevinlewis

TOM GRONEMAN
ASSISTANT EDITOR

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EDITOR

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LEGACY

NEXT:

BEN REILLY: THE SCARLET SPIDER #18, on sale 5/16!



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BE SURE TO MARK IT "OKAY TO PRINT"!

